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THE GARDEN CALENDAR
Fall Gardens

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A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC associate radio stations, Wednesday, August 29, 1934.

Well, folks, I had a great time on my trip to Toronto, Canada, last week attending the annual convention of the National Vegetable Growers Association, and I did intend to tell you all about the convention and some of the people I met, but a matter of considerable importance has come up, so today I am going to talk to you about "Fall Gardens".

The same old story, I think I hear some of you saying, but on August 16, Secretary Wallace and his advisers held a press conference to consider the prospective 1934-35 food supply in its relation to dietary requirements. Last Wednesday you may recall Miss Van Deman in her Household Calendar told you that there is no general shortage of food in the country, but on the other hand, certain of the basic commodities are below normal production, and other more plentiful products will have to be substituted for them in the diet. For example, butter, cheese, eggs, lard and margarine, pork, poultry, and potatoes, are all slightly below normal. Plenty of bread materials are in sight, also plenty of vegetables, with the possible exception of potatoes and sweet potatoes.

The whole point is that certain adjustments and substitutions will have to be made in the diet of many of our people in order to have what Miss Van Deman, Miss Stibeling and the other nutritionists call an adequate or well-balanced diet, and to avoid any chance of hunger or malnutrition among our people. As a result of the Secretary's conference it was recommended that fall gardens be planted wherever possible in order to increase the supply of vegetables, especially green or leafy vegetables which are exceptionally rich in vitamins.

There is still time in all of the central southern portions of the country to plant certain vegetables for fall and winter use. Good rains have fallen over considerable of the drought area and wherever soil moisture and other conditions are favorable it would seem desirable to make plantings of such crops as spinach, turnips, kale, broccoli, lettuce, fall onions, and, in some cases, carrots and beets.

You folks who live south of Tennessee can grow 10 to 12 kinds of vegetables during the entire winter, and by so doing you can greatly increase the variety in your diet. Those of you who live in the South Central States, that is, in the latitude of Washington, D. C. can still plant practically all of the crops I have mentioned and get good results.

One of the main points in planting a fall garden is to have your soil in the proper condition. Where the land is badly overgrown with grass and weeds, I would advise removing this growth from the land. Ordinarily, I would recommend plowing or spading it under to enrich the soil, but if this is done now the material that is turned under will not rot quickly enough, and will interfere with the cultivation and growth of the fall crops. I would advise applying some well-rotted manure wherever this is possible.

Another point to remember in growing a fall garden is that the remaining period for the growth of the crops is short, that the days are shortening, and that everything must be done to hasten the growth. For this reason it is desirable to apply a fair amount of a quick-acting fertilizer. Nitrate of soda acts very quickly and supplies the nitrogen. In most cases, however, a complete fertilizer containing nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash will be desirable. A good plan will be to apply an all-around or complete fertilizer at the rate of - say 500 pounds to the acre- then later if the crops do not seem to be making a satisfactory growth, a light top dressing of nitrate of soda can be given to hurry them along. The leafy vegetables such as spinach, kale, and lettuce will stand plenty of nitrogen.

Another point in planting the late or fall garden is to use early varieties for the simple reason that the early varieties mature in a shorter period of time than do the later varieties. It is now too late in most of the northern and central sections to plant snap beans, but there is still plenty of time to make a fair crop of turnips and ample time for spinach and kale. Many people are fond of water cress, and, by the way, water cress is very rich in vitamin content, and is splendid for use in salads. Water cress can be grown on beds of soil, but it requires plenty of lime and a reasonable amount of water. I have been very successful growing water cress during the late fall and early spring by planting it in a coldframe.

While you are planning and planting your fall garden it is a good idea to have the early spring supply of vegetables in mind and perhaps plant a few winter onions and other crops that will carry through the winter and give you something from your garden quite early in the spring. There are at least ten winter crops that you southern gardeners can grow without difficulty, and don't fail to have a generous patch of turnips for greens. Under the circumstances it is very important that we all safeguard the matter of variety in our diet, and a fall garden will help in many cases. The point is we must act quickly for the remaining growth period is short.